



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission

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Charles R. Fullwood, Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Melba McGee
Office of Legislative and Intergovernmental Affairs

FROM: David Cox, Highway Project Coordinator
Habitat Conservation Program *David Cox*

DATE: June 21, 1995

SUBJECT: Request for information from the N. C. Department of Transportation (NCDOT) regarding fish and wildlife concerns for US 17 widening, from Jacksonville to New Bern; Onslow and Jones counties, North Carolina. TIP No. R-2514, SCH Project No. 95-0871.

This memorandum responds to a request from Mr. H. Franklin Vick of the NCDOT for our concerns regarding impacts on fish and wildlife resources resulting from the subject project. Staff biologists with the N. C. Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) have reviewed the proposed improvements, and our comments are provided in accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (42 U.S.C. 4332(2)(c)) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

NCDOT proposes to widen existing US 17 from Jacksonville to New Bern to a four-lane, median-divided roadway with widening through or bypasses around Pollocksville, Maysville, and Belgrade. The cross-section for widening through the towns would be a five-lane, curb and gutter section. If bypasses were built, the cross-section would be a four-lane, median-divided freeway with full control of access. Limited control of access would be maintained throughout the widening portions of the project.

We feel that every effort should be made to use as much of the existing alignment as possible. The up-grade of existing roadways reduces wildlife habitat fragmentation, reduces wetland impacts and eliminates the need for new wetland and stream crossings. We are especially concerned about the fragmentation of large tracts of land on or adjacent to the Croatan National Forest, Hoffman Forest, and the White Oak River. Maintenance of large, contiguous tracts of forested land is critical to species such as black bear and wild turkey.